Contabile

The First UK Filksinging Convention

Chequers Hotel, Newbury, 3rd/4th/5th February 1989

Progress Report

The Committee

"Who are these utterly wonderful people who are so selflessly organising this con?" I hear you cry. No? Didn't think so, but here, anyway, is a quick run-over — sorry, run-down — of the committee.

Mike Whitaker: Chairman and hoarder of guitars *(seven at the last count)*, who may never forgive me for writing this...

Rhodri James: Membership Secretary, and such an unspeakably modest and spledid person that you simply won't believe who's typing this.

Gytha North: is a Guest of Honour, so if anyone catches her doing a stroke of work at the con they are to stop her immediately!

Valerie Housden: Committee Member in charge of Competence, the one who reminds us what we're supposed to be doing.

Rafe Culpin: Committee Member in charge of Worrying, the other one who reminds us what we're supposed to be doing.

Phillip Allcock: Committee Member in charge of Something, who wonders what we are supposed to be doing.

Steve Linton: Committee Member in charge of Money, who tells us we can't afford to do it.

What is Filk?

Filk-singing is the music of SF conventions. It's songs about SF, fantasy and fandom. It's songs about anything else fans get involved with, such as computers or gaming. It's basically anything that anyone wants to sing.

Some filks are to original tunes – more often the tunes are 'borrowed' with the words changed. Some are funny, some beautiful, many just raucous (often drunken) chorus songs.

You don't need to be able to sing well to be a filker.If you don't want to, you don't have to sing at all. British filkings usually run as a "Pick, Play or Pass" Bardic circle. 'Pick' a song for someone to sing, 'Play' one yourself or simply pass.

The Flying Filk Fund

The Flying Filk Fund is a fan fund set up (originally) to bring Leslie Fish over to England for **Contabile.** We are fairly close to our goal, which is £385 by January 1st 1989, but all donations are most welcome. Any surplus will be passed on to future filk cons to invite more American guests over.

Best Dressed Filk

Whilst there won't be a masquerade at **Contabile,** we will be awarding a prize, just to keep the costume fans happy, for the filker who is most appropriately dressed whilst performing a filk. So, start thinking!

Leslie Fish by Lawrence Dean

If I'd been asked about Leslie Fish prior to Conspiracy last year, I would have probably have said "Pardon?" or "Who?" For it wasn't until Conspiracy that I first set eyes on any American filk tapes and realised just how far ahead of us they were. After hearing some of Leslie's songs on two compilation tapes I bought myself there, it wasn't long before I'd added all of Leslie's own tapes to my collection. I was also fortunate enough to obtain a copy of the beautifully illustrated **Cold Iron** songbook. I was hooked.

Let's start with the easy bit, then, and quote from the bio of Leslie which appears in the **Cold Iron** songbook.

"Leslie Fish was, according to her own report, born in a dull suburb in New Jersey, to dull parents, and attended dulls schools until graduating from a dull high school – after which she swore she'd lead a life of high adventure, and that she has done. She was heavily involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements, made her living as a professional folksinger and railroad worker in Chicago, and has been active for many years as a union organizer for the I.W.W. – the "Wobblies". A firm anarchist, she visited Berkley in 1982, and within a year left Chicago for California, where she somehow felt she fit in. She's a published science fiction author and member of the Science Fiction Writers of America, and a prolific writer of SF folk music – filk – which she sings and plays on Monster (her twelve-string guitar) whenever she can find suitable rabble to rouse."

© Off Centaur Publications 1986

There are many of Leslie's songs which I would count among my own favourite filksongs, and these include: 'Toast for Unkown Heroes', 'Transport – 18', 'Pride of Chanur', 'Swamp Gas', and the indisputable classic 'Hope Eyrie'. She has also produced some excellent songs in collaboration with lyric writer Mercedes Lackey, and two outstanding tapes consisting of songs she has written to Rudyard Kipling's original verse. As a professionally published writer of SF, she has had stories included in each of C. J. Cherryh's **Merovingen Nights** anthologies.

Gytha North by Colin Fine

There is a disappointing tendency in all of us to put things in categories. Worse, we make judgements based on the categories: "That's not science fiction!" "No, I don't listen to rock." We often put people into categories as well, and nowhere more so than among fans. Such and such a person is a mediafan, a truefan, a gaming fan etc.

From time to time you meet somebody who defies these compartments. Gytha North is one. To some she is - and will always be - a media fan; though if you visit her house you will find more books than in some bookshops. To others she is a dealer - and even then there are categories, because she deals in pewter and pottery, badges and jewellery, rather than books and comics. To others Gytha is Captain Fancy-Dress, or That Woman in the Outrageous Costume, or She Who Must Be Obeyed (particularly on Con Committees). It is rumoured that in her diurnal life she is a Sybil Serpent at the Department of Stealth and Total Obscurity. We honour her in her aspect as The Filker.

But Gytha subsumes and transcends all these. What she is is Fun. Whether singing, looking striking, drinking, viking or anything else-ing, Gytha is Gytha - and good to be with.

Gone are the days when filking did not happen at British cons unless Gytha was there to lead. But it was her enthusiasm, her enjoyment, and her basso voice that got it all going here. Listen to Gytha sing when you get the chance - and make sure you catch some of her own songs. But even more, enjoy her company when you get the chance - it'll be worth it.

Hotel and Info Forms

Included with this PR there are your Hotel Booking Forms *[cue wild cheering]* and General Information Forms *[cue chants of "Gytha wants me for a Gopher"]* . Please fill these in and return them as quickly as possible; the earlier you let us know what rooms you want, the more likely you are to get your first choice, and of course the sooner you let us know your bright ideas, the more likely we are to have time to put them into practise. But you all knew that already, didn't you?

A few explanations/tips on filling in the forms:

1) Please use a pen, pencil, paint brush, crayon or other writing implement – I'm afraid I don't read cuneiform so scratches are out.

2) On the hotel form, please tick the relevant row for when you intend to arrive and depart, or if you are not arriving/departing on one of the listed days fill in your expected dates under "Other." Please note that all rooms cost £20·00 per person per night, apart from a single person occupying a double or twin which costs £40·00 per night, and that this includes a continental breakfast. English breakfasts are available at a surcharge of £2·50 per night. Just tick the box of your choice.

3) Please number the different types of room in the order you would prefer them. Don't number any options you don't even want to consider, you might end up with them if you do! *[Sorry to make this sound so much like an idiot's guide, but I'm trying to explain it to the Chairman. I think being filked has gone to his brain, poor dear].*

4) Write down on the info form anything you think might conceivably be relevant to us, especially any ideas you may have on how things could be done. Also, please do volunteer to help with everything; book early to avoid disappointment!

5)The instruments section is so that you can tell us if you are bringing something unusual like a hammer dulcimer that needs to be laid on a table, or something dangerous like a serpent *(pace Hoffnung)* .

6) Post both sides of the form back to us at **Contabile, 7A Mill Road, Cambridge CB1 2AB.** Please feel free to photocopy either (or indeed both) side(s) of the form as and when you need to, or even send in separate pieces of paper if it helps.

Please Note...

There will be, we are sorry to say, no crêche available at the convention.

There will be no hard-and-fast weapons policy at **Contabile**: if you wish to wear a costume including items which would be considered offensive weapons under British law, or could be mistaken for such, <u>you must possess approval in writing from Gytha.</u>

Taping Policy

A lot of people bring recording Walkman-type tapers to filkings to produce their own recordings. This is perfectly welcome at **Contabile** as long as the following points are observed:

1) Such tapes should be for personal use only, not for giving out or selling multiple copies.

2) Please respect the performer's wishes if they ask that a song not be taped, for whatever reason.

3) Please remember that the performance is for the enjoyment of those present; **not** for your taper, and keep your taping as unobtrusive as possible. In particular:

- Don't push microphones into people's faces or at their instruments.
- Don't keep leaning forward to adjust the taper. If you put it out in front near the singer, it should be left there until the end of the song.
- Don't jump in and demand details of a song immediately before or after every song.
- Don't form a barrier of tapers round a shy or inexperienced singer.

Please remember that this is a **filk** convention, for people who want to perform and listen to music: as such, the committee would appreciate it if people refrained from behaviour likely to spoil other people's enjoyment, particularly talking during performances. Don't make us ask you to shut up or move elsewhere – you won't like it, and neither will we. Equally, just because the words to someone's song are in 'Wassail Test' or 'On Filkely Moor', that doesn't imply a licence to 'assist' a solo performance.

How to Get There (see also map overleaf)

By rail: Trains run out of London Paddington at least once an hour. You'll have to change at Reading if you're unlucky. From the station go up St Bartholomew St., then Northbrook St., then the Broadway, then bear left into Oxford Rd and the Chequers is on the right.

By Coach: Coaches arrive at the Wharf. Go up Park Way, turn left into Park St., right into the Broadway, then bear left into Oxford Rd and the Chequers is on the right.

By Car: Leave the M4 at junction 13. Take the A34 south until you reach the London Rd roundabout, turn right into London Rd, right again at Oxford Rd, and the Chequers is on the right.

Credits:

This PR was typed and largely invented by Mike Whitaker and Rhodri James - extra material provided by Colin Fine, Lawrence Dean and Rafe Culpin.

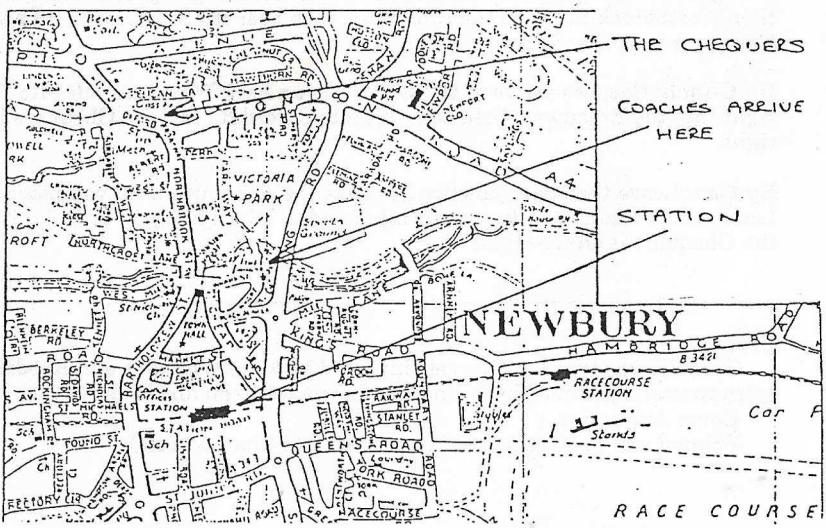
Cover Art by Fox.

Printed and photocopied at Shape Data Ltd (thanks boss!)

Contabile Members as at 25/11/88

Phil Allcock 9A
Pat Ames 12S
D J Bass 36A
Marion Beet 24A
David Bell 34A
Chris Bell 44A
Kenneth Bell 45A
Brian Biddle 35A
Erwin Blonk 15S
John Brewis 13A
Ben Brown 25A
Pat Brown 41A
Dave Brown 43A
Vanessa Chan 40A
Chasa 37A
Mike Cheater 55S
Rafe Culpin 3A
John Dallman 28S
Steve Davies 6A
Lawrence Dean 8S
Roger Dearnaley 30S
Michele Dennis 29S
Martin Easterbrook 26A
Swirling Eddy 39A
John English 21A
Colin Fine 51A
Leslie Fish 0G
Gwen Funnell 18A
Mike Gould 58S
John Harold 38A
Niall Hedderley 33A
Valerie Housden 10A
Rhodri James 2A
Steve Linton 4A
Jan Lord 22A
Bruce Macdonald 19A
Chris Marriott 7A
Hugh Mascetti 31A
A C Maynard 32A
Shaun Murrant 49A
Gytha North 42G
Chris O'Shea 14A
Omega 59A
Harry Payne 48S
Elinor Predota 56S
Richard the Rampant 5A
John F W Richards 54A
Andy Robertson 27S
Roger Robinson 23A
Tony Rogers 57A
Anne Rundle 50A
Kate Soley 11A
Marcus Streets 53A
Nick Tyrrell 46A
Madeleine Tyrrell 47A
Marion van der Voort 16A
Richard van der Voort 17A
Peter Wareham 20A
Richard Wheatley 52A
Mike Whitaker 1A

(A = Attend., S = Support., G = Guest.)

Current Rates:

£12 attending – going up to £15 on the door
£5 supporting
£7 to convert - no, you can't join as supporting on the door & then convert!!!